

**United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Criminal Investigation Division  
Investigative Activity Report**

**Case Number**

0605-0064

**Case Title:**

Gulfport Energy - West Cote Blanche Bay

**Reporting Office:**

Baton Rouge, LA, Resident Office

**Subject of Report:**

Interview of EPA Region 6 Inspector (b) (7)(C), (b) (6)

**Activity Date:**

August 8, 2012

**Reporting Official and Date:**

(b) (7)(C), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (6)

Special Agent

09-JUL-2013, Signed by: (b) (7)(C), (b) (6)

**Approving Official and Date:**

(b) (7)(C), (b) (6)

Special Agent in Charge

09-JUL-2013, Approved by: (b) (7)(C), (b) (6)  
Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge

**SYNOPSIS**

The Baton Rouge Resident Office is conducting an investigation into allegations that Gulfport Energy Corporation discharged produced waters and oil into West Cote Blanche Bay, a water of the U.S., without a permit.

On August 8, 2012, Special Agent (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) conducted an interview of (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) Inspector for EPA Region 6 - Facility Response Plan (FRP)/Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan at the U.S. Coast Guard Station in Morgan City, Louisiana. Details of the meeting are discussed in the following narrative.

**DETAILS**

On August 8, 2012, Special Agent (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) conducted an interview of (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) Inspector for EPA Region 6 - Facility Response Plan (FRP)/Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan at the U.S. Coast Guard Station in Morgan City, Louisiana. The main focus of this interview was to cover (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) inspection of Gulfport Energy's West Cote Blanche Bay (GEWCBB) facility, which was conducted on July 19, 2011. Upon introduction, SA (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) presented (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) agency issued badge and credentials, at which time (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) consented to be interviewed and provided the following information:

(b) (7)(C), (b) (6) has conducted FRP/SPCC inspections for the EPA since May 2008. (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) explained EPA's Region 6 has approximately 2000 facility FRP's in (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) assigned area of operation and (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) is one (1) of only two (2) inspectors assigned to conduct such inspections. As such, (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) conducts approximately 200 inspections per year. (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) briefly explained there are regulations which cover what must be done for "prevention" of oil spills and also what is mandated for "response" readiness.

Before conducting an inspection, (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) conducts an in house review of the documents, which were previously submitted by the facility representative. After reviewing the facility records, (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) conducts the field inspection to verify what the representatives have reported.

(b) (7)(C), (b) (6) advised the July 19, 2011, inspection of the GEWCBB facility was conducted jointly with the United States Coast Guard. (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) noted that there are very few unannounced inspections, as such, this inspection was scheduled with Gulfport Energy prior to (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) arrival.

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(b) (7) (C) (b) reviewed the inspection report with SA (b) (7) (C) (b) and opined the facility was generally in good condition at the time of this inspection. During the inspection, (b) (7) (C) (b) conducted a review of pressure test records, observed the piping on the facility, protective curbing (a barrier of a few inches in height, which surrounds the facility to prevent pollution run off into the open water) and oil and produced water storage tanks, as well as other items. (b) (7) (C) (b) noted that most of the deficiencies were with the lack of required documents, lack of emergency contacts and phone numbers and having some response equipment in the wrong places.

(b) (7) (C) (b) opined the lack of required documentation was likely due to using an inexperienced consultant. (b) (7) (C) (b) could not recall the name of the consultant but advised (b) (7) (C) (b) had similar paperwork problems with other facilities (not owned by Gulfport) as a result of this consultant.

SA (b) (7) (C) (b) showed (b) (7) (C) (b) the photograph of the caisson which (b) (7) (C) (b) took during (b) (7) (C) (b) inspection and asked if the caisson was legal to use. (b) (7) (C) (b) stated caissons were (b) (7) (C) (b) “pet peeve”. (b) (7) (C) (b) said caissons are allowed by law; however, they have a high potential for releasing pollutants into the environment because they are affected by the tide. (b) (7) (C) (b) further explained a caisson is a “catch” basin with holes at the bottom near the sea floor. If the water drops too low as a result of a low tide the pollutants are released through the holes, which are at the bottom of every caisson. (b) (7) (C) (b) stated (b) (7) (C) (b) looks at every caisson on every inspection and discusses the operation with the operators at the respective facilities.

SA (b) (7) (C) (b) pointed out to (b) (7) (C) (b) there were two (2) pipes depicted in the photograph (b) (7) (C) (b) took during (b) (7) (C) (b) inspection. SA (b) (7) (C) (b) asked (b) (7) (C) (b) if (b) (7) (C) (b) observed any of the pipes discharging produced waters. (b) (7) (C) (b) reported during (b) (7) (C) (b) inspection (b) (7) (C) (b) did not observe any unpermitted produced water discharges nor did (b) (7) (C) (b) see the pipe leading to the caisson, which was observed by USCG personnel on March 18, 2012.

(b) (7) (C) (b) utilized the photograph to show SA (b) (7) (C) (b) that during (b) (7) (C) (b) inspection there were only two (2) pipes which lead to/from the caisson and advised one (1) of the pipes was directing deck drainage fluids (fresh water, oil, and any other fluids collected from the deck) into the caisson. After the oils and other pollutants separate from the water and float on top, they are then sucked back into the production system via the second pipe and a sump pump.

During (b) (7) (C) (b) inspection, the caisson at GEWCBB was being used in a fashion which was allowed by law. (b) (7) (C) (b) reported (b) (7) (C) (b) did not see any oil sheens during (b) (7) (C) (b) inspection near the caisson or any other areas of the facility.

(b) (7) (C) (b) told SA (b) (7) (C) (b) produced waters are never allowed to be discharged into fresh water, which is the case for West Cote Blanche Bay, and further stated produced waters must be disposed of via barge or injection well. (b) (7) (C) (b) advised (b) (7) (C) (b) has no knowledge of injection wells.

(b) (7) (C) (b) was asked about (b) (7) (C) (b) knowledge of the pipes which lead to the injection wells and how they are tested, at which time (b) (7) (C) (b) told SA (b) (7) (C) (b) it is standard procedure for him to review injection well test reports; however, the report only indicates that the well lines were tested a “certain pressure for a certain amount of time” and the results reports for GEWCBB facility simply stated “satisfactory”. (b) (7) (C) (b) stated to (b) (7) (C) (b) knowledge well pipe tests are done annually and it would be difficult to determine if any leaks existed in the pipes unless there was a major hole in the pipe.

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(b) (7)  
(C), (b) noted Gulfport Energy was notified of their deficiencies and had the GEWCBB facility in compliance within thirty (30) days.

This investigation is continuing

**ATTACHMENT**

C. (b) (7)  
(C), (b) Inspection report  
Gulfport Energy Letter  
FRP checklist  
Caisson photo  
Photo log

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